

MINUTES
STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD
July 19, 2002

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Neil Bernstein, Chair
Robin Fortney
Kathy Gourley
Scott Moats
Timothy Sproul
Laura Jackson
Jeff Vonk

STAFF PRESENT

Daryl Howell
John Pearson

OATH OF OFFICE

Timothy Sproul and Scott Moats took the oath of office.

CALL TO ORDER

John Pearson, in the absence of a chairperson, called the meeting of the State Preserve Advisory Board to order.

APPROVE AGENDA

Motion was made by Neil Bernstein to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Robin Fortney. Motion carried unanimously.

ELECTION OF CHAIR

Neil Bernstein nominated Kathy Gourley. Kathy Gourley declined the nomination.

Timothy Sproul nominated Neil Bernstein. Seconded by Kathy Gourley. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVE MINUTES

Recording secretary Carol Arpy said the minutes for the April meeting had not yet been mailed out and asked for the approval to be deferred to the following meeting.

ROCK ISLAND PRESERVE

Daryl Howell presented a formal request from the Linn County Conservation Board for the dedication of the 100-acre parcel of land that was recently donated to the conservation board, into the state preserve system as an addition to the Rock Island Botanical Preserve.

Dick Heft, President of the Linn County Conservation Board said they informed the State Preserves Advisory Board of the donated property at their January 2002 meeting. They are now making a formal request for preserve status and presenting a draft management plan for the Preserve Advisory Board's review. He said the management plan had already been submitted to Daryl Howell and John Pearson of the Department of Natural Resources. He asked the Preserve Advisory Board to review the management plan and submit their comments to the Conservation Board prior to the Preserve Advisory Board's next meeting, which is scheduled for October.

Dan Biechler from the Linn County Conservation Board distributed the draft management plan. He said the yet to be developed maintenance plan referenced in the management plan would contain detail on the sub zones of the area and how they will be managed and maintained. Mr. Biechler also distributed a copy of the most recent issue of the Old Hickory Newsletter containing an article dealing with compromise and the fact that Iowa has compromised away a lot of its natural areas.

Neil Bernstein said feedback on the draft management plan should be presented as a board not as individual board members.

Jeff Vonk suggested that the comments of the board members could be submitted to Daryl Howell and John Pearson who would then compile them and submitted to the board members for review at the October meeting.

Robin Fortney asked what inventories were currently being done and if they would be adequate for the Board to make a decision on preserve status.

John Pearson said that Tom Cady was currently doing an inventory of the plants at the existing preserve. There is an inventory being done of small mammals which includes reptiles, amphibians, birds, and small mammals by Terry VanDeWalle, which is focused on the existing preserve. Frank Olsen is doing a butterfly inventory of the preserve and the proposed addition. He said there are also some Iowa Department of Transportation funded studies underway in the proposed addition including a plant, reptile and amphibian, and butterfly.

Laura Jackson asked if the draft management plan was for the existing preserve or the new area.

Dan Biechler said it was for both the existing preserve and the proposed addition.

Neil Bernstein asked if the County Conservation Board had any studies currently underway.

Dan Biechler said that they had contracted with Frank Olsen to do a butterfly inventory of the area, who has been out numerous times. He said Mr. Olsen has rediscovered the Byssus skipper in and around the preserve.

HARTMAN RESERVE

Vern Fish, Associate Director for the Black Hawk County Conservation Board introduced Joel Haach, President of the Friends of Hartman Reserve, Ruth Buck, Black Hawk County Conservation Board liaison to The Friends of the Hartman Reserve, Kathy Kerr and Terri Roger also from the Friends of Hartman Reserve. He said the Hartman Reserve Nature Center has been around since 1976 and has as one of its most outstanding features, an upland forest. He showed promotional video about the reserve. Mr. Fish said the management plan for the Hartman Reserve Nature Center designates active use areas and natural areas. In the upland forest active use areas have been limited to 20% of the property leaving the remaining 80% in its natural state. Active use includes trails, boundaries, parking lots, buildings, utility poles, etc. He said they have also undertaken an effort to restore the ecosystem that had been there originally through management tools such as burns and restricting access. He said part of the charter for the preserves board is to protect and preserve unusual flora, fauna, geologic, archaeological, scenic, or historical features of scientific and educational value and he would argue that they have the greatest potential to provide educational opportunities to the State of Iowa of any preserve other than Starr's Cave in Burlington, which is also associated with a nature center. He said that is the reason he is recommending that part of Hartman Reserve be put into the State Preserve system. He distributed a color map of the Reserve. He said the important thing to remember is that there is already an agency, a community, and a neighborhood that is committed to managing this natural area and that every one of their programs has an educational component to it, which affects a lot of people.

Laura Jackson asked why protective needs of the area are not met under the current circumstances.

Vern Fish said although the area is currently protected, staffing and community needs change with time. Preserve status would ensure that the area is permanently protected.

Neil Bernstein asked the board members to review the management plan and species list in preparation for the tour planned for October 24 and to route their questions and comments to John Pearson and Daryl Howell who will compile them for the board's review.

BANISTER-MCGREGOR WOODS

Neil Bernstein said on June 4, 2002 the Preserves Board were the guests of Bruce Banister and his wife Carola and Bill and Doris McGregor on their property near Boone to tour a proposed preserve site.

John Pearson said he went out to the area after the tour to collect some additional information and has compiled the majority of the information he found in the report that was sent to the board members in their agenda packet. He said he identified an area that he thought was a very high quality natural forest including upland and bottomland

areas. He said the bottomland area is very interesting because it has the full spectrum of bottomland forest communities that you would expect to find in this part of the state. He said if the preserve status is something the board wishes to pursue there are historical elements to the property that he did not explore. There was some concern ten years ago about a road being put through the area, which had been blocked when a judge issued a permanent injunction against building the road, however the ultimate fate of the road remains uncertain.

Bill McGregor said what they are trying to do is to maintain the undeveloped area as is as an example of what nature was and still is.

The board discussed the owner's requests on page 7 of John Pearson's report. The board expressed concern about the request to build an art studio in the natural upland forest and the request to cut dead and downed trees for firewood.

Jeff Vonk said there was a need for caution because a proposed road was not a legitimate reason for preserve status.

Scott Moats asked who would be responsible for management of a privately owned preserve.

John Pearson said it was something that would be addressed in the management plan but generally the owners of the preserve were responsible for management with guidance from the Preserves Advisory Board and the Department of Natural Resources.

The board discussed using easements to obtain a buffer area if preserve status was obtained. They also discussed the necessary inventories to determine if the area qualified for preserve status and how the area would fit into the existing preserve system.

John Pearson said he would prepare a report of the current preserves for the October meeting.

Timothy Sproul said he was concerned about the lack of consistency in the expectations for entities wishing to obtain preserve status. He felt the lack of standards might result in the quality of preserve status being diminished.

Jeff Vonk asked what the estimated cost of doing the necessary inventories would be.

John Pearson said it would be \$3,000 to \$4,000 for a plant survey of the Banister McGregor site.

Jeff Vonk moved to direct the Department to explore possibilities of funding up to \$4,000 to do the floristic study in the next field season to determine if Banister-McGregor Woods qualifies as a preserve. Seconded by Laura Jackson

Greg Beisker from the Iowa National Heritage Foundation said he would like to strongly encourage everyone to look at the use of conservation easements or deed restrictions to obtain buffer areas if they are interested in preserving the rest of the property. He said the Iowa National Heritage Foundation would be happy to hold the conservation easements if the DNR or the county conservation board do not. He said that since people who have been on the site have seen rare species he did not feel that a full floristic study was needed to enter it into the state preserve system though it would be a good idea to have it done for baseline data. He asked the board not to forget about the scenic quality of the preserve, which is one of the qualifications for preserve status.

Motion carried unanimously.

DELONG WOODS

John Pearson said Karl DeLong is a recently retired biology and zoology professor at Grinnell College. He is a professional ecologist who for many years has been working on the restoration of 40 acres of land located south of Grinnell. When he obtained the property 30 years ago it was overgrazed woodland to which he has applied the concept of savanna restoration through thinning, burn treatments, and seeding with native species over the past 15 years. He said it is the longest-term savanna restoration in Iowa. John Pearson said he had the opportunity to tour the area in the spring and found it to have the visual aspects of a savanna. Karl DeLong has made species lists and kept meticulous documentation on the restoration process. He said Dr. DeLong would like to provide for the long-term preservation of the property and in particular this savanna community.

Neil Bernstein said he is concerned because Mr. DeLong admits that some of the seed did not come from the adjacent area so there is a mixture of genotypes therefore it is not a historic savanna woodlands. He said he has a question as to whether a restoration would qualify as a preserve.

John Pearson said Mr. DeLong has documentation on all of the seeding he has put into the property. He said the vast majority of the vegetation is native species of local ecotype. Most of the seeding went into the prairie, which a relatively small portion of the property.

Laura Jackson said the language of the statute says that a property is to be dedicated to maintenance as nearly as possible in its natural condition but need not be completely primeval in character at the time of dedication. She said we do not know what the natural condition of a savanna was because there are no known remnants of savannas in Iowa. She asked if we do not have any remnants left of savannas do we just eliminate them or accept the best efforts at restoration that anyone has done.

Neil Bernstein said he would feel a lot more comfortable if the plants had not been ordered from so far away because he felt it compromised the issue. He asked John what percentage was restoration.

John Pearson said the forest is approximately 90% of the site and the prairie only 10% and 90% of the restoration has taken place in the prairie. Therefore the restoration has been mostly focused on the prairie.

Neil Bernstein said the next step for him would be to tour the property.

It was decided to schedule a tour of the area in 2003.

Timothy Sproul said there was a need for clarification on the definition of a preserve.

HAYDEN PRAIRIE

Daryl Howell reported that five ten-inch holes had been found in the SW corner of Hayden Prairie State Preserve that appear to have been made by someone digging up plants. The Department has requested some additional signage that is to be posted along the road informing the public that the removal of plant materials from a preserve is illegal.

Timothy Sproul asked if the sheriff's office had been contacted or if there had been any news coverage on the incident.

Daryl Howell said that Mark Leoschke was going to write a press release to put in some of the local newspapers with a possible state wide press release that does not mention specific areas but informs the public that it is illegal to remove materials from publicly owned property.

Motion was made by Laura Jackson to urge the Department to develop additional signage for the preserves that would inform the public that collection of species from the preserve is prohibited by law. Seconded by Robin Fortney. Motion carried unanimously.

WHITE PINE HOLLOW FISH KILL

John Pearson said on June 20, 2002 he was at White Pine Hollow assisting with some forest inventory work. When he went in at approximately 10:00 a.m. the stream was fine but at about 7:00 p.m. when he was leaving the preserve he noted a strong ammonia smell along with the distinct smell of hog manure. He said he reported the incident to Mike Wade, Environmental Specialist from the Manchester office, who investigated the incident but was unable to determine the source. Although the spill did result in a fish kill there were fish present in the stream a few days later. Mike Wade will continue to follow up on the incident and the Preserve Board members will receive a final report at the following meeting. In addition, Tom McCarty, a feedlot specialist, plans to visit the open feedlots in the watershed to make suggestions to owners to reduce the potential for manure contaminated storm water from open lots.

STRASSER WOODS

John Pearson reported that there had been improper disposal and open burning at Strasser Woods State Preserve.

Jeff Vonk asked if it made sense to the board to keep a property in the preserves system that is not being properly managed. He asked for the background information on Strasser Woods to be brought to the next meeting so that the board can determine who was designated to manage the property, review original intent of dedicating it as a preserve, and determine if that intent is still being served.

Laura Jackson said that with the threat of exotic species such as garlic mustard invading the preserves the money, time and effort to manage the existing preserves will increase dramatically. She said she was concerned that if preserves were decommissioned because of lack of management, in the future the board would be forced to give up a lot of them.

Robin Fortney said that was the reason that public support is so important in the preserve system. It is important that the neighbors understand what the preserve is and to encourage them to become involved in the active management of the preserve.

Neil Bernstein said although he had not been to Strasser Woods preserve he felt the board could not judge what the value is of a woodland to a metropolitan area. He said that if a preserve is decommissioned regardless of the reason it would only make it easier to decommission one for another reason, such as a highway needing to go through.

Jeff Vonk said that perhaps a more proactive approach for the Preserves Board would be to spend some of its time thinking of strategies on how to build support for the preserves.

Neil Bernstein said that one of the items on the strategic plan was to develop a “friends of the preserve” network. He suggested that the board start working through the list of existing preserves one at a time to develop a support group for each.

ADJOURNMENT

<i>Motion was made by Robin Fortney to adjourn. Seconded by Kathy Gourley. Motion carried unanimously.</i>

With no further business to come before the State Preserves Advisory Board, Chairperson Neil Bernstein adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m., on July 19, 2002.

BOARD TOUR

On July 20, 2002 the Preserves Advisory Board met at Pictured Rock County Park and put in to the Maquoketa River for a float trip through Indian Bluffs State Preserve.

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